Reflections on the fall of a great Man.

A

SERMON

Preached to a

CONGREGATION

OF

Protestant Dissenters

At

Daventry in *Northamptonshire*,

On Occasion of the

DEATH

Of the late REVEREND

ISAAC WATTS, D. D.

WITH

A Sketch of his Character, chiefly drawn from his WRITINGS.

By CALEB ASHWORTH.

The SECOND EDITION.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

Advertiſement.

THIS Sermon was preached from a few ſhort hints, haſtily thrown together, to my own People, about ſeventy miles from *London*, and (as may eaſily be imagined from theſe circumſtances) without the leaſt deſign of ever being made publick: But as I knew the high veneration moſt of the Audience had for Dr. *Watts*, and the Eſteem in which they held his writings; I thought it might prove an opportunity of fixing ſerious impreſſions on

their minds. It was with this view, not to embalm his memory, that I entered ſo far into his character; but an intimate Friend of the *Doctor*'s, in the neighbourhood of *London*, who deſired a copy of my Sermon, having thought proper to ſhew it to ſome other perſons, drew on me ſuch Importunity for the publiſhing it, as I have not been able to reſiſt. If any ſhould think me deſerving of Cenſure in venturing on the publication, I hope this account of it (which ſeveral of my Friends know to be true) will in ſome meaſure, abate their Severity.

C. A.

2 SAM. iii. 38.

---- *Know ye not that there is a Prince and a great man fallen this day in* Iſrael?

PERHAPS you may not——but are ready to wonder, what has occaſioned my chuſing theſe words, at this time, as the foundation of a diſcourſe; and to aſk, Is ſome wiſe Politician dead, whoſe advice uſed to direct and animate the publick councils? ſome noble Patriot, who had a peculiar diſcernment of the Nation's intereſts, and a ſteady generous zeal in the purſuit of them? Or ſome Captain, of diſtinguiſhed ſkill in the dreadful art of war; who was wont to lead out the choſen Bands with wiſdom and intrepidity, and to bring them home victorious? Theſe are talents, which render their poſſeſſors great, in common eſteem, and their fall the ground of juſt and general lamentation;

and

and on ſuch an Occaſion, the queſtion in the text was firſt aſked. But had a like event happened among us, (as bleſſed be God, there has not) it would little ſuit the deſign of this Aſſembly, to enter upon the character of ſuch a Man, though I were much more equal to the undertaking, than a perſon of my profeſſion can reaſonably be ſuppoſed. Yet an event has happened in the church of God, which, from us Chriſtians, demands deeper concern, than the fall of the moſt able Politician, the trueſt Patriot, or the braveſt and moſt ſucceſsful Warrior; thoſe pillars, and bulwarks of a State. I mean the death of *Dr. Watts*[a]: Whoſe writings have been of ſuch remarkable ſervice, to ſo great a part of the chriſtian world; have been peruſed by us, with ſo much pleaſure; and will I doubt not be yet dear to us, and to our children after us, in many ſucceeding generations. Surely on ſuch an occaſion, if any ſhould obſerve ſome marks of unuſual concern in our countenances, we might juſtly reply to them, *Know ye not that there is a Prince, and a great man fallen in Iſrael?*

Theſe

[a] Who departed this Life the 25th of *Nov.* 1748. in the Seventy-fifth Year of his Age.

Theſe words *David* makes uſe of, to vindicate his mourning for the death of *Abner*; a perſon of conſummate valour and policy, who had been treacherouſly murthered by *Joab*, partly in revenge of an old quarrel, and partly, as it might ſeem, to get rid of an obſtacle to his ambition, and a dangerous Competitor with him for glory, and the King's favour. *David* was, no doubt, ſenſibly ſtruck with the barbarity of the crime, and concerned at the loſs of ſo great a man, and able a General; and he might alſo have ſome political reaſons, for ſuffering the real concern of his heart, to become viſible in his countenance and carriage: For you find, he did not content himſelf with mourning in ſecret; but openly diſcovered his inward agony, by refuſing his Food: and was ſo much engaged in meditation upon this ſad event, that he would not ſuffer himſelf to be interrupted even ſo long, as was neceſſary to eat a morſel of bread; but when many of the people came to urge him that he would take ſome refreſhment, declares

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his determination to faſt *till the ſun was ſet*; and in the words of the text demands their grief, as well as vindicates his own; *Know ye not that there is a Prince, and a great man fallen this day in Iſrael?*

We find in this context, that though *David* had reigned in *Hebron* for ſeveral years, a conſiderable part of the People ſtill adhered to the Family of *Saul*; but he was now going to be generally acknowledged by the whole Nation. A ſeaſon, wherein one would expect nothing ſhould be heard, but the voice of Joy and Triumph; but behold, he calls all the people together to mourn! his Princes, the Captain of his hoſt, and all his attendants, move on in a ſorrowful proceſſion with *Abner* to the grave, and himſelf follows the Bier as chief mourner; and when his Servants ſeemed to cenſure his grief as exceſſive, he vindicates its height, and its continuance, by reminding them, that a great Man was fallen. Now this conduct and language of *David*, ſeem to lay a juſt foundation for the following Remark;

That

That the fall of a great man, ought not to be paſſed over as a *common event*, but calls for an attentive and mournful regard.

The truth of which I intend, (as God ſhall enable me) to evince, and illuſtrate: though I ſhall not confine myſelf to uſe the word, *great*, juſt in the ſame ſenſe in which it could be applied to *Abner*; as I imagine the Propoſition, in any other ſenſe of that word, is equally ſupported by this paſſage; and *David*'s aſſigning his reaſon in general terms, plainly intimates that greatneſs in general, not merely this or that particular ſpecies of it, demands ſome eſpecial regard.

I may demonſtrate this by two very plain and obvious arguments; that the fall of a great Man is a great Loſs,—and that it is capable of teaching us a variety of uſeful leſſons; from each of which it will appear, how much ſuch a circumſtance deſerves our attention.

I. The fall of a great man is a proportionable Loſs to the publick.

Such was the caſe with *David*. By the fall of *Abner* he had loſt a gallant Officer, a popular Miniſter, one very capable of ſerving him, and whom he at leaſt apprehended to be, an able and truſty Friend; and *Iſrael* had loſt one whoſe counſel might guide and unite, whoſe valour might animate and defend them. And whenever a great man dies, the ſurvivors muſt ſuſtain a Loſs; but eſpecially when the greatneſs is of that kind, which is now under our conſideration. If *David* thought it ſufficient to juſtify his mourning, nay that it would have left him expoſed to blame, if he had not mourned, that a man of *Abner*'s eminence in council and in arms was fallen, let it not be ſaid of us, *the righteous periſh, and no man layeth it to heart*[b]. The loſs of *Abner* though publick, was confined to one Nation; though great, was chiefly of a civil nature; and whatever

[b] Iſa. lvii. 1.

whatever *David* might promiſe himſelf from the affection and endowments of this great man, he ſeems to have been of an haughty untractable temper, too boiſterous and aſpiring for a peaceable Subject, or a ſteady and faithful Friend. But in the caſe before us, the world is deprived of a burning and ſhining light, the univerſal church of God of a judicious and affectionate Inſtructor, as well as his particular Friends, of the ornament and delight of their chearful hours, and the aſſwager of their ſorrows. I am ſure, we muſt have little knowledge who he was, and of how great uſe ſuch men are to a Nation, and to the intereſt of religion in particular, or have little real affection for either, if we are unconcerned at the fall of ſuch a friend to both.

II. Such a loſs is capable of teaching us a variety of uſeful Leſſons.

1. We may learn from it the evil nature of ſin.

Death is the wages of ſin, was introduced by it, and a part of the ſentence pronounced on the firſt tranſgreſſor; *Duſt thou art, and unto duſt thou ſhalt return*[c]. Thus *ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin; and ſo death paſſed upon all men, for that all have ſinned*[d]. Howmany thouſand bodies that were *fearfully and wonderfully made*[e]; nay, howmany generations of men, once living and active, are turned to duſt; till almoſt the whole maſs of earth is changed, and the particles that compoſed human bodies are ſcattered and blended, ſo promiſcuouſly and extenſively in the common heap, that we can hardly take an handful of it, but we ſhall gather up the aſhes of ſome of our Progenitors, though now incapable of being diſtinguiſhed? O Sin! how vaſt the ſlaughter thou haſt made! how many and wide thy trophies! a whole Nation, yea a whole World reduced to duſt by thee; the moſt beautiful and exact viſible parts of Nature, turned to putrefaction and rottenneſs by thy fatal influence! This is the caſe as to the com-

[c] Gen. iii. 19. [d] Rom. v. 12. [e] Pſal. xxxix. 14.

common herd of mankind: their death proclaims the malignity of ſin, by which it was occaſioned. But muſt the great, the excellent alſo die? muſt the countenance that awed or that charmed every beholder, be thus diſhonoured? muſt the Limbs that were turned with the niceſt art, poliſhed with exquiſite ſkill, or ſtrung with the firmeſt Vigour, become ſtiff in death, and moulder to Duſt? muſt the bodies of thoſe, who were celebrated for their Sagacity, and rendered amiable by every endowment, natural and acquired, be laid on a level with Brutes? Yes, not only thoſe of the moſt graceful Forms, poſſeſſed of exalted Honours, and renowned for their intellectual Abilities; but thoſe, whom true Grace has purified and adorned, muſt pay the common tribute to nature, and even the duſt of the moſt eminent Saints, be laid in the grave to refine. When we ſee ſuch deſolation, ſure we cannot forbear reflecting, that ſin is very hateful to the bleſſed God, or he would not abandon theſe faireſt and nobleſt parts of his workmanſhip, to drop into ruin; yea,

to

to become a prey to corruption, and the feaſt of worms.

2. The fall of a great man proclaims aloud the Vanity of human greatneſs.

By human greatneſs, I mean any of thoſe diſtinctions which merely relate to the preſent life, whereby one man is raiſed above another. Now death is a ſtain upon this greatneſs; ſhows how far it is from being perfect; and on the whole, that thoſe diſtinctions are not worthy ſuch impatient deſire, and unwearied application, as they often excite. Is the man that enjoys riches called great? *They profit not in the day of death*; and when we find thoſe, that have the largeſt revenues, unable by any means to *redeem their brother*[f] from the Grave, or to purchaſe for themſelves an hour's reprieve; how little and deſpicable do ſuch poſſeſſions appear! Does greatneſs conſiſt in external ſplendor, in titles of honour, or places of truſt? *Vanity of vanities! they are all vanity*[g]. This was

[f] Pſal. xlix. 7. [g] Eccleſ. i. 2.

was the caſe of *Abner*. He was a Prince, a Favorite in the court of a grand Monarch; but how vain did his fall proclaim this kind of greatneſs! Does it conſiſt in intellectual abilities, in large natural attainments, or the fame of great actions? Do the ſubtlety of the Politician, the wiſdom of the Philoſopher, or the trophies of Conqueſt, conſtitute a great man? What did policy, or ſtrength, or all the atchievments of war profit *Abner*, whom notwithſtanding, the ſword of a treacherous friend ſlew, and had he eſcaped that, he muſt e'er long have fallen by the unerring ſhafts of death, in ſome other form. The penetration of the Stateſman contrives an exact plan of government, and ſecures a Nation by the arts of Peace, or by forming wiſe alliances in time of war; but has not been able to *make a covenant with the Grave*, or find an ally able to divert the ſtroke, or reſiſt the power of Death. The Philoſopher, who by reſearches into the works of God, has learnt to deſcribe the motions of the heavenly bodies, to aſſign the laws by which they act, and has explored a thouſand Myſteries of nature; has no where found out the ſecret,

cret, to make himſelf immortal. Death enters his ſtudy, and puts an abrupt period to his Inquiries. Nor is he who has gained immortal Fame by conquering Nations, able to defend himſelf from this univerſal Conqueror. Death is not afraid to attack thoſe, who are dignified with the higheſt titles, and diſtinguiſhed by the Enſigns of ſupream power: and amidſt the records of mortality, we often find it written, as it were in triumph over human greatneſs, "Here lies the great ——"

Surely we need go no farther than the tomb of this great man, to ſee a moſt ſenſible illuſtration of this humbling truth, *that every man, at his beſt eſtate, is altogether vanity*[h]. What is there of human greatneſs that can be the juſt object of our ambition, which he did not eminently poſſeſs? A fertile imagination, a ſerene underſtanding, a ſound judgment, a tenacious memory, a ſingular ſweetneſs of temper, a large and diffuſive knowledge of natural ſcience, and a wide acquaintance with the world, eſpecially

[h] Pſal. xxxix. 5.

cially with the heart of man. We have perhaps ſeldom known a human mind formed with ſuch large capacities, or ſtored with ſo rich furniture by ſtudy and obſervation, and yet adorned with a meek and quiet ſpirit. His greatneſs was an aſſemblage of whatever was neceſſary to form an eaſy companion, a faithful friend, an agreeable writer, and an uſeful member of ſociety. That ſuch a man ſhould *fall*, is an inſtructive Lecture on the frailty of the moſt delightful productions of Nature, and the imperfection of the moſt exalted human Minds; but eſpecially *the manner of his fall:* had we been witneſſes that this great man, even for many months before his death, had almoſt entirely loſt all that was once peculiar to him; the vivacity of thought, the clear and diſtinct conception, the quick recollection of Ideas, and the facility of comparing them: could we have ſeen him who was once the ſpirit and the delight of the company, by the wiſe and pertinent part he bore in converſation, appear like an abſent Perſon, and almoſt incapable of converſing at all; I ſay, could we have obſerved this,

without crying out, *How are the mighty fallen!* And now he is dead, methinks it ſounds in mine ears this moving Admonition, *ceaſe ye from man*, from every man, *whoſe breath is in his noſtrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of*[h].

O my Soul! 'tis even ſo: one of the greateſt men thou ever kneweſt is fallen. *And ſeeketh thou great things for thyſelf? ſeek them not*[i]: or if thou wilt be great, place thine affections on more ſubſtantial and divine things, and by a courſe of diſtinguiſhed labour and faithfulneſs, aſpire after *glory, honour, and immortality*. This is true and heavenly greatneſs; worthy thine ambition: this is what this eminent Saint coveted, and which has ennobled and crowned him in that world, where terreſtrial Diſtinctions are known no more.

Hitherto we have chiefly conſidered Greatneſs in a general ſenſe, or rather as it relates to external Advantages. But we ſhall now con-

[h] Iſa. ii. 22. [i] Jer. xlv. 5.

conſider that view of it, which was peculiarly applicable to the perſon whoſe Death we are lamenting; and this will inſtruct us,

3. That the fall of a great man, ſhould engage us to bleſs God who made him great.

Every good and perfect Gift comes down from the Father of lights[k]. 'Tis from him that their greatneſs was derived, and that they received all their abilities for Service, however eminent and diſtinguiſhed. It becomes us therefore to acknowledge him, as the Author of all. This we ſhould do while they are living; but as we are then too apt to neglect it, 'tis proper to make it the ſubject of our thankſgiving, on their Death; and it may be the rather expected, as great men are often more honoured after they are removed, than while they were enjoyed; and perhaps the world, perhaps we ourſelves, ſhall be more ſenſible of the value of this great Man, now he is gone, than we have ever been before. But how much ſoever we have

[k] James i. 17.

eſteemed him, or may further eſteem his memory, let us remember he was only *a man whom* God *delighted to honour*. Never was any man more ſenſible of this, than he: none more humble, or unwilling to arrogate any thing to himſelf, or more ready amidſt the abundant evidences of his uſefulneſs, which ſurrounded him, to adopt the words of St. *Paul*, *Who are we but miniſters by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man*[l]? And, if I might be allowed the expreſſion, it would give him pain in heaven, to find that his name was celebrated on earth, to the diſparagement of his great Maſter's: and that men ſhould aſcribe to him, the benefits they receive from his writings, as tho' by any *power or holineſs of his*[m], thoſe benefits were conferred.

We are mourning that this great man is fallen; but let us not murmur. It becomes us rather to adore God, for making him ſo great; without which, we ſhould not have had this occaſion to mourn; and that he continued

[l] 1 Cor. iii. 5. [m] Acts iii. 12.

tinued him ſo long, capable of performing ſo many acceptable and honourable ſervices to his Church: a mercy that has been highly endeared and enhanced, by the painful and threatening indiſpoſitions, with which he has often been viſited, and confined. Really when we conſider in how weak a ſtate he has frequently lain, it ſhould awaken in us no little thankfulneſs, that God has lengthened out his life to a good old age, and given the World the enjoyment of a bleſſing, which he not only might, but which he often ſeemed to threaten, he would much ſooner remove.

4. The fall of a great man is a loud and affecting call to exert ourſelves with greater diligence, in purſuit of the nobleſt purpoſes of life.

When a great man in a Nation or a Church falls, it makes a wide breach, which while we mourn, it becomes us to uſe our utmoſt endeavours to heal. To lament is what we cannot avoid, if we have any ſenſe; but we

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ſhall not eſteem this ſufficient, if we have any Piety. *Joſhua* no doubt mourned the Loſs of *Moſes*; but the divine Being pointed out another duty, and rouſed him from that ſtupidity by which his mind ſeems to have been ſeized and benumbed in the firſt views of it, to enter upon and finiſh the work, he had left imperfect. "*Moſes my Servant is* "*dead, now therefore ariſe*[n], and lead on the "People." Thus doth it become us, in our ſeveral ſpheres, to exert ourſelves with ſo much the more diligence, that we may, as much as poſſible, ſupply the vacant place, and there may be no *lack of ſervice*[o]: eſpecially when a man great in this ſenſe falls; when one, ſo peculiarly diligent and ſucceſsful in the cauſe of Religion, is taken away.

But perhaps you may think ſuch advice more proper to be addreſſed to Miniſters. And I muſt own there is ſome additional Service devolved upon us Miniſters, and my heart fails me when I conſider it. O that we might each of us know, and perform our part as becomes us! but I will venture to ſay, there

[n] Joſh. i. 2. [o] Phil. ii. 30.

there is ſomething that you can, and ought to do, towards ſupplying the place of this great man. Permit me, in this view, to mention ſome good works wherein he abounded, and which he can now perform no more, but which it is incumbent on you to practiſe and maintain.

He was eminent in Prayer.

Know ye not that in this reſpect a prince, and a great man is fallen; a great man of God, who *like a Prince had power with the moſt High*[p]. How tender an affection did he bear towards this Nation! How was his Soul grieved to ſee and hear men, in the moſt daring and outrageous manner, affronting the bleſſed God, and his Son: and with a dreadful perſeverance, and a kind of united violence, pulling down divine Judgments on their own heads, as if they were impatient till they came! How has he wreſtled with God to avert the vengeance that awaited us, and obtain the unmerited bleſſing! and how *much* may we reaſonably ſuppoſe, *the fervent in-wrought prayers of this righteous man*

[p] Gen. xxxii. 28.

man have availed[q], towards our present prosperity and establishment! For a praying generation of Prophets are *the Chariots of Israel, and the Horsemen thereof*[r]; are as useful for the security and welfare of a Nation, as any human arts or armaments. How importunately did he plead in private, for the prosperity of the Church of God, and the interests of Religion, when confined by long indispositions from publick labours! But his *prayers are* now *ended*[s]. He will no more pray for the Nation, the Church, or for you; let me intreat you then, so much the more importunately to pray for yourselves. The state of our Nation, of its religious Interests, and of our own Souls, require that we should be more frequent and earnest with God than ever; especially now, that the number of praying persons is lessened, and that we have lost, as it were, a whole Host in one.

He was a noble example of Charity.

His *Liberality* to persons in distress was great, in proportion to his Circumstances; and in this service, he employed the honourable

[q] James v. 16. [r] 2 Kings ii. 12. [s] Psal. lxxii. 20.

able acquaintance he had with perſons of affluent Fortunes. How many have been relieved in want, or fixed in employs that have afforded them a comfortable maintenance, by his bounty or intereſt! many, who when *their eye ſaw him bleſſed him* [t], are now mourning that the *merciful man is taken away* [u]. And in how many inſtances has he given, not only ſilver and gold, but what might be more needed, though perhaps leſs deſired, uſeful and inſtructive Books; a circumſtance, which I the rather mention, as we have enjoyed this effect of his liberality. The Poor then have loſt a Friend, let us endeavour to ſupply his place; and though probably we cannot ſhow our kindneſs to the ſame perſons, let us do it more abundantly to *thoſe who are of the houſhold of faith* within our acquaintance; that the loſs of ſuch a publick Benefactor may be leſs ſenſibly felt.

I muſt add, he was remarkable for his *charitable Sentiments*, and for maintaining a truly catholick diſpoſition to all about him.

[t] Job xxxix. 11. [u] Iſa. lvii. 1.

How much ſoever they differed from him, or how unkindly ſoever they treated him, if he could diſcern any thing in their temper and conduct, that beſpoke the real chriſtian, they were ſure to be the objects of his charity: nay they would find that he not only forbore every harſh reflection upon them, but very evidently felt a cordial love to their Souls, and diſcovered a ſincere readineſs to perform the moſt condeſcending offices of Friendſhip. Let us take care, that there be no diminution, by his death, of this amiable Grace, for which he pleaded ſo earneſtly, and which he ſo eminently practiſed.

He laboured with uncommon diligence in the ſervice of Religion and immortal Souls.

It were a long taſk to introduce a catalogue of all the enterprizes he undertook and executed in this view. His labours as a *Miniſter* were great; of which, I doubt not, the Church of Chriſt on whom they were beſtowed for fifty years, can abundantly teſtifie. They know what painful efforts he made

made to edifie and comfort them. They are his Record, that he did not feed them with what was raw and unwholſome, dry or inſipid; did not provide for their ſupport, the chaff of Speculation, the thiſtles of Controverſy, or the empty flowers of Oratory; but ſolid and well choſen Food, ſweet to a ſpiritual taſte, and fit to nouriſh the divine life.

His labours as an *Author* were amazing: eſpecially conſidering the invincible embargo ſo often laid on him, by extreme weakneſs: and his perſeverance in them truly noble and generous, when not only bodily indiſpoſition, but the obſervation and experience of the obſtinate unteachableneſs of many, might have formed a very powerful diſcouragement.

Though he was capable of converſing with the greateſt men, and on the moſt abſtruſe ſubjects, as appears by his ſucceſsful attempts to make ſome of the learned Sciences more eaſily attained; yet he condeſcended to become *a teacher of Babes*; and happy is it

for us, and for our Children, that he did; he having furniſhed us with the beſt aſſiſtance we any where meet with, for inſtructing them in the *Doctrine and Hiſtory of our Bibles*; for *preſerving them from the Vices and Follies* to which they are ſo much expoſed, as well as forming their unpractiſed lips, to the ſublime duties of *Prayer and Praiſe*.

Nor has he confined his labours to the explaining theſe duties to Children; but has given us *a free and rational account, of the Gift Grace and Spirit of Prayer*, ſuited to the edification of the moſt *eminent* Chriſtians, yet containing ſuch directions for the practice of it, as will leave the *meaneſt and moſt ignorant* without excuſe, in the neglect of that Duty. And his attempts to render our *anthems of praiſe* more evangelical and edifying, were ſo ſucceſsful, that our circumſtances can hardly be ſo uncommon, but we may find a ſacred Song ſuited to our Caſe. The happy manner in which he has rendered theſe compoſures, intelligible to the ignorant and illiterate, yet inſtructive and delightful

lightful to the more intelligent, ſhew at once how warm a deſire of extenſive uſefulneſs animated his heart, and how ſkilful a hand directed his pen: while the ſtrong images, the bold flights, the lively painting, the ſublimity of thought, and majeſty of expreſſion, that occur in ſome other of his poetical writings, proclaim what a Maſter he was in that Art, and how much ſelf-denial he practiſed, in condeſcending to a lower ſtrain, when the genius of thoſe, for whom he wrote, required it.

The pains he has taken to defend the Goſpel, ſhew what a high veneration of it poſſeſſed his heart. The growing neglect of this gave him concern, and engaged him to enter *a Caveat againſt Infidelity*, and to illuſtrate the humbling truth of *the Weakneſs of human Reaſon*, againſt thoſe who magnified its ſufficiency, to the diſhonour and neglect, of divine Revelation.

But it was not the Name of a Revelation that pleaſed him, or the Belief of it alone that

that he aimed to promote, but a cordial and affectionate Sense of its peculiar Discoveries. It was this that engaged him to discourse on the great design of it, as having its foundation in *the Ruin of Mankind by the Fall of their first Parents, and intended for our Recovery*. And as he saw with unfeigned grief, the neglect wherewith the Lord *Jesus* and his Spirit were treated, he has particularly considered and defended the Character and Offices of *the Redeemer and Sanctifier*, in this important Work.

His design in all his theological Writings most apparently was, to promote practical and vital Religion; without which he well knew, a speculative Belief of the Gospel, or the warmest Zeal for its peculiar Doctrines, would be of no importance. The decay of this, appeared to him so general and threatening, that it occasioned his making an *humble*, and blessed be God, I hope in many instances, a successful *Attempt towards its revival*, by a serious and affectionate address to Ministers and People, urging upon them

the

the reſpective advantages they enjoyed, and the obligations by which they were bound, to do their utmoſt in ſo neceſſary a work. But leaſt it ſhould degenerate into cold and lifeleſs Formality, he has largely inſtructed us in *the Nature of the human Paſſions, their Uſe and Abuſe in matters of Religion*; and eſpecially in *the nature importance and influence, of the Love of God*; by the prevalence of which in the Soul, all the reſt will be guided, and conſecrated.

His *Sermons on various ſubjects*, have been a cordial to us in our retirements, and inſtructive in our families, as well as have often entertained us on ſuch occaſions as theſe [w]. I need not remind you, my Friends, of the peculiar pleaſure with which we have peruſed his diſcourſe, *on the pious Soul's drawing nigh to God*; or of the pleaſing and awful affections that have by turns poſſeſſed our minds, while he deſcribed *the lovely Youth periſhing in Sin*. How many of us have been refreſhed

[w] An evening Lecture; where a printed Sermon was ſometimes read.

freſhed by his *evangelical Diſcourſes? Our Faith in the truth of the Goſpel, confirmed: our Regards to Chriſt, the Lamb of God,* ſtrengthened: the Hopes of the weakeſt increaſed, while we have ſeen *the beginnings and firſt acts of Faith deſcribed*; and carried on almoſt to aſſurance, when we ſaw it in its higheſt advances, and grown up, as it were, to knowledge and certainty. How have our hearts glowed and gathered confidence, when *the witneſs of the Spirit* has been *explained*: and we have found all our Experience related to us, in thoſe juſt and lively deſcriptions of *the Conteſts between the Fleſh and Spirit.*

He was a true Friend of Liberty, though he would never give up the cauſe of Truth, or ſacrifice any part of the Goſpel, to make a comprehenſion with Infidels. He knew how to *contend earneſtly*[x], and yet in the Spirit of Peace, *for the Faith once delivered to the Saints*: and has explained and defended what appeared to him, according to Scripture ſtandard,

[x] Jude, ver. 3.

ard, to be *Orthodoxy*, at the ſame time repreſenting it in the cloſeſt connection with *Charity*.

And to engage our regards to the whole ſcheme of Chriſtian doctrines and duties, graces and virtues, he held forth the promiſed crown of life; directing our views to thoſe bleſſed Abodes, where *ſeparate Spirits* are *made perfect*; and in the ſtrongeſt Colours painting before us, the different eternal States of *the World to come*.

Theſe are ſome of his principal Labours as a Writer, in the Service of Religion. But beſides this, his *Heart and Life* were a fair Book, in which the ſeveral characters of a true Chriſtian were plainly delineated: where the Love of God, Faith in Chriſt, and diffuſive Benevolence to men, together with the influence theſe Principles ſhould have on the whole Temper and Conduct, were exhibited with a more engaging Luſtre, than any deſcriptions could afford, even from a pen like his own.

This great man is fallen! Let us ſtand in his place, ſucceed to the work which he has left, *and go our way and do likewiſe.* What! will you ſay, ſhall we write ſuch Treatiſes? Surely you cannot imagine I meant it—— but let us maintain that Regard to the truths and duties of Religion, he maintained: let us ſhew the ſame Zeal, and uſe the ſame Diligence, for promoting the noble deſigns, he promoted; and now that one faithful Servant of *Chriſt* is called away, let us labour ſo much the harder in our reſpective ſtations, whether of publick, or private life. 'Tis in vain to object, it is but little that we can do. There are none but may do ſome good; and God often honours thoſe moſt, who are readieſt to look on themſelves, as mean inſtruments. We are not to think ourſelves excuſed from labour, becauſe we are not ſo great as he was. If ſo, how few modeſt men would ever pretend to labour at all?

But I have entered much farther into his Character than I had intended, and enlarged this

this head far beyond its proportion. I now proceed to obſerve

5. The fall of a great man, in this ſenſe, teacheth us that Death is not an abſolute evil.

A great man is fallen. The Head that ſo often contrived and ſtudied for the glory of God, will in a few days be laid in the Duſt; and thoſe animated Features, that on every great occaſion, glowed with ſo ſignificant an ardour, are already but pale Clay. The Lips that pleaded the cauſe of Virtue and Religion, with ſuch propriety and affectionate energy, are ſilent. The Hand that has wrote ſo many inſtructive pages, is cold and motionleſs, hangs down never to be employed more. He that converſed ſo much with God; that thought and ſpoke, that wrote and acted ſo eminently for his Honour, is dead. Is it ſo?—then we may conclude, that death cannot be abſolutely and always an Evil; if it were, how comes it that the wiſeſt, the beſt, the moſt illuſtrious dye;

thoſe whom Grace adorns, and God approves? Even ſuch Greatneſs as this does not exempt from the ſtroke of Death, but ſurely it makes a glorious difference in dying.

You know there is a great man fallen; 'Tis an affecting loſs, and calls for mourning. But from his fall we may extract this divine conſolation; That God has a way of making his People happy even by their death. Though it be a ſenſible mark of his diſpleaſure againſt Sin, it is not to ſuch a puniſhment. How eaſily may we infer from the Caſe before us, that God has a way of changing the aſpect of Death, and making it a paſſage to life; or he would not permit thoſe *Veſſels*, though they are but *earthen*, to be broken, in which he has put ſo excellent a *Treaſure*[y], and thoſe Bodies to be forſaken, which he has ſanctified and inhabited as his *Temples*[z].

This ſhould in ſome meaſure reconcile us to the thought of dying, if we are *followers* of

[y] 2 Cor. iv. 7. [z] 1 Cor. vi. 19.

of them, who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promiſes[a]. While

6. The fall of a great man ſhould wean our hearts from the world they have left.

It ſhould do this on various accounts. 'Tis an affecting lecture of Mortality. "Are "thoſe who were tall and ſtrong trees in "the Plantation, beautiful and fruitful, cut "down? how then can I expect to be ſpared, "that am only a low Shrub? God has call-"ed away an able and faithful Servant out "of his Vineyard; I cannot expect to con-"tinue long, who have been ſuch a Loiterer, "and was never like to do him much Ser-"vice." Theſe ſentiments will draw off our Affections from a World, which we know we muſt ſoon leave, even though we had ever ſo many valuable and beloved Friends in it; but really when we alſo conſider, how many excellent Servants of God, in publick and private ſtations are taken away, it almoſt makes one ſick at the Thoughts of

[a] Heb. vi. 12.

of living in a world, which they have left deſtitute and impoveriſhed.

Again, as our World loſes by the Death of theſe great men, the other gains by it. They fall in our World to riſe more illuſtrious there. Could we trace this great man exulting before the throne of God, triumphing in immortal youth and vigour, freed from pain, from the incumbrance of the Body, and lowneſs of ſpirits forever, and joined to the *general Aſſembly and Church of the firſt-born*[b]: could we diſcover how bright he ſhines, how ardently he loves, how humbly he adores, and hear the melody of his Songs, it would make us ſoon weary of this vain World. When we have been reading, and found our hearts delighted, with his excellent compoſures, how have we ſometimes longed to hear one ſermon from his lips, or converſe with him for an hour: and how happy have thoſe of us reckoned ourſelves, who had ſuch an Opportunity? But if it was ſo pleaſant to converſe with this ſaint

[b] Heb. xii. 23.

ſaint on Earth, what muſt it be to converſe with him now he is improved by the ſociety of Angels; has learnt their Songs; has joined their Triumphs; and is entered on the eternal Sabbath? O bleſſed counterballance for all the ſolitary Sabbaths he ſpent on Earth! When we recollect the pleaſure, we have ſometimes felt in ſinging his *divine Hymns*, let our Souls ſay whether there is any Joy in our World, worthy to keep us from the heavenly melody; any earthly attachment that when God calls us, ſhould make us unwilling to join with him in the Chorus of the Bleſſed, who ſing *the ſong of Moſes and the Lamb*, which ſo much exceeds the moſt extatic human Compoſures: eſpecially when we conſider that this pleaſure, great and exalted as it may ſeem, is but a ſmall part of the Bleſſedneſs of the celeſtial World; for what is it to join in the moſt ſublime acts of Adoration and Praiſe, even with ſuch a Saint in Glory, compared with the ſatisfaction and joy, which will diffuſe through the Soul, from the immediate Preſence and

Enjoy-

Enjoyment of our common Father and Saviour!

7. and *Laſtly*, The fall of a great man, ſhould teach us to prize and ſeek an intereſt in the bleſſed God.

Death proclaims the imperfection of the beſt Mortals, and that the greateſt of men, are but men. How important, how uſeful, how deſirable ſoever our Friends may be, and by whatever tender bonds they may be united to us, Earth cannot be the ſtage of an immortal Friendſhip. The courſe of Providence will not be altered; it ſweeps away one great man after another, though not only a circle of private Families lament, but a Nation ſhakes at their Fall. How neceſſary then that we tranſlate our affection and dependance, from Earth to Heaven; from theſe uncertain ſupports, to the ever-living God: and in proportion as our eye is directed to, and fixed on him, we ſhall be compoſed amidſt all the Ruins of time and nature. When a great man falls, ſome concern

cern ſhould be ſhown; but let us not mourn as though the Church would ſink and die too, with any man how great ſoever. Its exiſtence and ſtability does not depend on any Mortal; but upon him who hath ſaid, *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive forevermore* [c]. One uſeful Miniſter after another may finiſh his Courſe, and be called home from his Labours, *but the children of his ſervants ſhall continue, and their ſeed be eſtabliſhed before him* [d]. God has, and will have, at leaſt, a little Church in the world; and is able, and has engaged to preſerve and defend it, by whomſoever it is deſerted and forſaken; and though many pious and venerable Fathers and Miniſters are dead and dying, *the Lord liveth, and bleſſed be our Rock, and let the God of our Salvation be exalted* [e].

On him therefore let us live; for with him is the reſidue of the ſpirit, of ſuch infinite ability, that a ſmall communication hereof, rendered this ſervant of his, ſo eminent and extenſive a bleſſing. To him let us direct our Prayers, that he would give us who

F ſur-

[c] Rev. i. 18. [d] Pſal. cii. 28. [e] Pſal. xviii. 46.

ſurvive, *a double portion of the* ſame *Spirit which reſted on him*[f]; that Spirit that not only can fill us with light, and love, and holy zeal in our Labours, but make them glorioufly ſucceſsful; can make our Miniſtrations mighty to the deſtruction of Satan's Kingdom, and to the profit and joy of ſouls: "That Spirit," as this great man expreſſes it*, "whoſe withdrawings are ſo felt in "our Cloſets, in our Pulpits and in our "Churches, as to call for louder lamenta-"tions than dying Miniſters;" for this Spirit, I ſay, let us plead; and while we are mourning that a great man is fallen, and an illuſtrious Prophet has left us, let our eyes be to him who conferred this greatneſs upon him; and inſtead of the plaintive ſtrain, *Our Fathers where are they? and the Prophets do they live forever*[g]*?* let our language be like that of *Eliſha*, when his eye could no longer trace his aſcending Maſter, *Where is the* LORD GOD *of Elijah*[h]*!*

[f] 2 Kings ii. 9. [g] Zech. i. 5. [h] 2 Kings ii. 24.

* In one of his private Letters.

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